

Nichiren Shu News

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THE MEANING OF OESHIKI IN OUR LIVES

By Rev. Kanjin Cederman, Seattle Enkyoji Temple

During this important time of Oeshiki (Memorial Service for our Founder Nichiren Shonin), I think it is important to understand what this observation imparts to us. Buddhist ceremonies are demonstrative examples of the Buddha-Mind and allow us to experience a moment in time based on the proper teachings that can inspire a shift in our mindset from self to Buddhahood. The Oeshiki Ceremony allows us to reconnect with the moment that our teacher, Nichiren Shonin, passed away into nirvana, defining his true compassion and purpose. However, simply holding a memorial service is not enough to bring about the correct mind and body experience necessary for real change. People today are not easily impressed and have become emotionally disconnected from life events, such as the moment of death. A multi-level and emotional event is needed to lead us to internal change. This is the challenge for modern Buddhism. Without a correct mindset, the ceremonies become empty observances, unable to inspire real change. The true purpose of Buddhism is to awaken an awareness of Buddha-nature, stirring our hearts with zeal for the Lotus Sutra and experiencing how it unfolds in our lives.

How do we do this? I have experienced such a change in my own practice and wish to share how it has regulated my life and inspired change. Again, the purpose of Buddhism is to change our lives through experiential teachings and practice. Most Buddhism has become a philosophy or historical record, but this is not enough to lead suffering

people to regulate and change their lives. What I am proposing is that Buddhism should awaken us to the true state of being a bodhisattva, not just conceptually but as a reality. It starts with you and your practice. If you do not understand how Buddhism is incorporated into your daily life, you will not experience the truth. Instead, you will simply be tapping swords together and never cutting. A sword is meant to cut, and a Buddhist practitioner is meant to express Buddhism in their lives. Nichiren Shonin states this point in his writing "On Diligent Practice" (*Toki-dono Goshō*). "Nichiren's followers must strive to attain Buddhahood by shortening sleeping hours and by cutting time for rest. If not, you will repent forever." Take this to heart!

Understanding this, we have the potential in each moment to direct our lives towards peace or suffering. This is found in the concept of "gyo" (focused practice), which was a crucial part of our Founder's teaching. *The Great Calming and Contemplation* of Grand Master Tiantai states that one should increase practice gradually and that consistency is the most important aspect to grow in faith and understanding. So, I will share one practice that you can do yourself each evening and morning that will help you experience a deeper Oeshiki moment each day of your life and to understand the above admonishment by Nichiren Shonin.

Before you lay your head down to sleep each evening, sit on the place where you will sleep, put your hands in *gassho* and realize that this is your death bed. In

Buddhism, sleeping is seen as a type of death in which the benefits of our practice deteriorate as our suffering mind covers the mirror of practice with dust. If we indulge too much, as Nichiren Shonin admonishes, it will be harder to maintain the benefit of practice. Next, thank the Buddha, Nichiren Shonin, and our ancestors for their teachings that we had an opportunity to learn and practice this day. Recall the events of the day. Ask yourself, "Did I keep my mind concentrated on Buddhist practice, or did I become distracted? Did I cause harm or benefit sentient beings with my life today?" Contemplate this with simple awareness of your life and practice. Don't think about it obsessively. Time has passed and the results of past actions can be seen at this time. You may not have another day to change, for each night as we sleep, we enter the spiritual world and may not return. Chant the

Odaimoku three times and put your head down.

If you are lucky enough to wake the next day, take time to rise from your bed. Do not jump out of bed. Be kind to your body for you will need it. Realizing that you are alive, be thankful. Sit up, put your hands in *gassho* and chant the Odaimoku. You have been given another day to practice as a human being after receiving the guidance of the Buddha and our Founder. You are profoundly fortunate to have another day to practice the Lotus Sutra. Slowly rise. Begin your day by visiting your home altar and saying, "Good Morning to the Buddha and Nichiren Shonin." If you have loved ones, be appreciative that they are there with you for this wonderful opportunity.

This is the mind of Buddhist practice. As our Founder passed into nirvana, he had indeed led a wonderfully beneficial life, leaving a positive legacy for the future. Nichiren Shonin had a mind such as this. You might think that this is depressing, but this is life. Understanding its beauty and challenges gives us the opportunity to pick the path of the Buddha over the path of suffering, transforming the most beneficial jewel of our life. As we change our lives daily through the practice of calming and contemplation, we will truly become the inheritors of the Buddha's and Nichiren Shonin's legacy. It is my hope that each one of us can inspire others with our lives, so that, when we leave this physical body, we will be in harmony with the passing of our Founder, and we will have bestowed great benefit to the world.



WASAN WORKSHOP HELD FOR INTERNATIONAL MISSIONARIES

By Rev. Yuon Ito

On June 25, a workshop on *wasan* (songs dedicated to the Buddha and Nichiren Shonin) was held at Shinjoji Temple in Tokyo. Four international missionaries,

Revs. Ervinna Myoufu, Shoryo Tarabini, Keiji Oshima, and Yuon Ito attended. The lecture and workshop were conducted by Rev. Giko Tabata of Eishoji Temple in Aomori Prefecture. Rev. Tabata is a *wasan* specialist and has conducted

many *wasan* workshops throughout Japan as well as overseas.

The history of *wasan* goes back to the Edo period. In Nichiren Shu, they are songs depicting the life of Nichiren Shonin accompanied by fan drums (*uchiwa daiko*) beaten in a certain rhythm. *Wasan* is sometimes included in a special anniversary event.

Rev. Tabata said, "*Wasan* is an effective way for lay members to carry out their strong belief without the leadership of their temple minister. The unison of the chanting and the rhythm of the drums make it very solemn. The group members practice for hours to perform a perfect service with their movements and chanting in complete unison. It is a way of showing dedication to Nichiren Shonin."

The group, who were mostly experiencing *wasan* for the first time, initially had a hard time keeping the steady rhythm of the fan drums while singing at the same time. They also needed to stand and walk in unison and to carry out the procedures in a flowing manner.

However, after five hours of intense practice, we were all able to complete the different songs successfully.

"I had heard and seen *wasan* services before but never had a chance to practice it myself. With simple and subtle movements, the beauty and depth of religious belief was well depicted and typically Japanese. Many members and followers overseas are interested in *wasan* and would like to practice it. I would like to brush up my skills and teach those who are interested," concluded Rev. Ito.

—Translated by Sandra Seki



Rev. Tabata instructing Revs. Shoryo Tarabini and Ervinna Myoufu on the procedures of *wasan*.



Instruction on how to hold the fan drum and stick.

GREAT FIGURES WHO HAD FAITH IN NICHIREN SHU (8)

ABUTSU-BO AND HIS WIFE, SENNICH-AMA

By Rev. Sensho Komukai

Abutsu-bo (1189-1279) was an Imperial Palace guard for the ex-Emperor Juntoku. When the retired emperor was exiled to Sado Island due to the Jokyu Disturbance, Abutsu-bo went with him as an attendant. The Emperor Juntoku passed away in 1242. Abutsu-bo and his wife, Sennichi-ama, remained on Sado and entered the priesthood to pray for the repose of his soul. They built a hermitage near his imperial tomb to chant the Nembutsu every single day for the ex-Emperor Juntoku.

On November 1, 1271, Nichiren Shonin, who was banished to Sado Island, was confined to a run-down hut called Sammaido Hall in Tsukahara. The news that Nichiren, an evil monk who was notorious for being a bitter enemy of Amitabha Buddha, was exiled to Sado Island, quickly spread throughout the island. Abutsu-bo had a virulent hostility towards Nichiren Shonin, who completely denied the Nembutsu teachings that he and his wife had held in great faith for 30 years. Abutsu-bo decided to go to the Sammaido Hall, willing to cut down the evil monk with a sword, if necessary.

Upon meeting, Abutsu-bo demanded an explanation for Nichiren Shonin's insistence that the Nembutsu teaching would lead people into the Hell of Incessant Suffering. Nichiren Shonin took time to explain why the Lotus Sutra was the supreme teaching. His lucid explanation and persuasive argument for the superiority of the Lotus Sutra reduced Abutsu-bo to silence, making him aware of how closed-minded he had been towards Buddhist teachings other than the Nembutsu. Abutsu-bo became convinced that the Lotus Sutra was the only teaching to save all living beings in this Saha World.

Abutsu-bo and his wife, Sennichi-ama, became ardent followers of Nichiren Shonin. They devotedly supported him on Sado Island. Nichiren Shonin greatly appreciated their dedicated support, saying in his letter to Sennichi-ama, "I will never forget that you visited me, often under the cloak of night, with your husband, Abutsu-bo, who carried a chest on his back while the local stewards and Pure Land Buddhists guarded my hut day and night, preventing anyone from

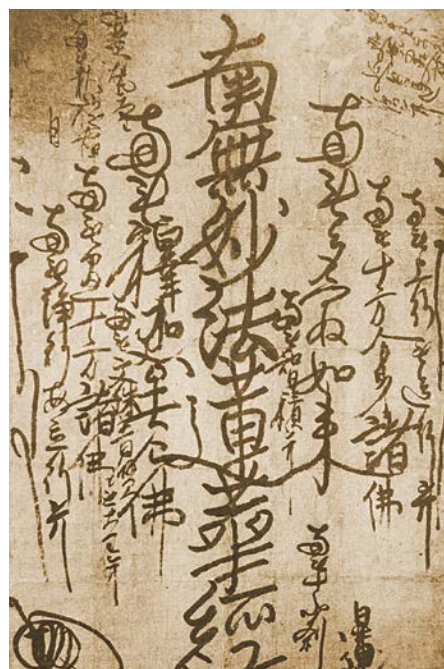


Abutsu-bo secretly taking things in the middle of winter to Nichiren Shonin during his exile on Sado Island. The painting is kept at Horinouchi Myohoji Temple in Tokyo.

visiting me. It made me wonder whether my mother had been reborn on Sado to support me."

Later, Nichiren Shonin was pardoned and returned to Kamakura in 1274. Nichiren Shonin later entered Mt. Minobu. Abutsu-bo, showing no sign of senility in his old age, visited his residence at Minobu, a journey of 20 days from Sado Island. He visited Minobu three times with the sole desire of seeing Nichiren Shonin. Abutsu-bo made his last trip to Minobu at the age of 90. Abutsu-bo died at the age of 91 in 1279. In accordance with his last will, his bones were buried at Mt. Minobu, close to Nichiren Shonin's hermitage.

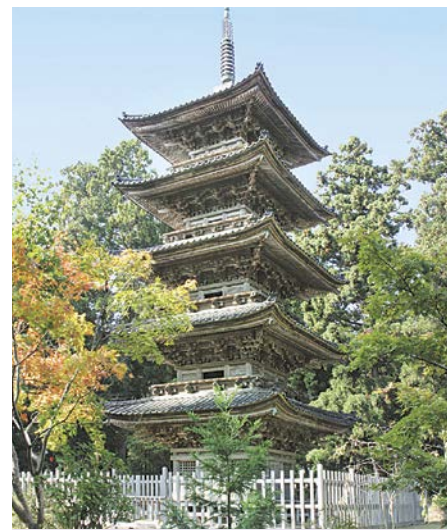
Nichiren Shonin gave Sennichi-ama the Gohonzon indicating that women were guaranteed to attain Buddhahood



The Gohonzon written by Nichiren Shonin for Sennichi-ama (Myosenji Temple).

through the Lotus Sutra. It measured 157 centimeters in length, and 103 centimeters in width. It was written for her by Nichiren Shonin when he was preparing to leave Sado Island. Nichiren Shonin also gave Sennichi-ama the Threefold Lotus Sutra in 10 fascicles and a dyed silk robe of a priest. All of these gifts proved that Nichiren Shonin showed a great deal of appreciation to Abutsu-bo and Sennichi-ama for their devoted support for him on Sado Island. They had a prominent faith in the Lotus Sutra and Nichiren Shonin.

Later on, Myosenji Temple was built by one of their great-grandchildren on the site where the home of Abutsu-bo and Sennichi-ama stood on Sado Island.



Pagoda on the grounds of Myosenji Temple.

REVEREND KANNO PREACHES (59)

"...practice and learning ought to stem from faith."

—Shoho Jisso-sho
(Treatise on All Phenomena as the Ultimate Reality)



Practice and Learning

"Practice" means Buddhist practice, while "learning" refers to the cultivation of wisdom. With wisdom, we should ascertain if the practice is done correctly. Practice is accomplished only when it is confirmed by the eyes of wisdom. Then it leads us to the ultimate goal: the realm of a peaceful mind, the realm of awakening. "Faith" is, needless to say, faith in the Lotus Sutra and the Odaimoku.

In *Ueno-dono Gohenji*, our Founder said, "Some have faith like fire while others have faith like water." But it is recommended not to have a temporary faith flaring like a fire that eventually burns itself out. True faith is the faith that is not conspicuous and can be compared to ceaselessly flowing water and is powerful enough to pierce through rocks over time.

Having this "faith of water in the Odaimoku, we will be able to conduct Buddhist practice and learning properly." So claims Nichiren Shonin.

As a result, we can receive "the actual proof of benefit." When Nichiren Shonin persuades us to chant the Odaimoku, he speaks of three types of proof of the benefit we receive by chanting the Odaimoku. These are documentary proof based on the words of the Lotus Sutra, theoretical proof as one thinks carefully about its teaching, and actual proof when one puts it into practice and derives benefit.

Nichiren Shonin valued actual proof the most. In other words, the proof of actual benefit. The benefits range widely from a nation's security to an individual's peace of mind. Having deep compassion for the people, Nichiren Shonin believed that "to persuade people to chant the Odaimoku, it is necessary to show the proof of actual benefit." He knew people would not be able to continue their faith without actual benefit. He was not, of course, referring to selfish benefits, but rather the benefits of peace, liberation from suffering, and ultimately the attainment of Buddhahood.

*Honorable Rev. Nissho Kanno, Archbishop of Nichiren Shu,
Chief Abbot of Ikegami Honmonji Temple, Tokyo*



Site where Nichiren Shonin had his hermitage in Minobu.

Temples Associated with Nichiren Shonin in Kamakura: The Tatsunokuchi Persecution

By Rev. Kanshu Naito

Nichiren Shonin was arrested on September 12, 1271, because he was a threat to the Kamakura Shogunate, and it was officially decided that he would be exiled to Sado Island. In actuality, he was taken to the Tatsunokuchi Execution Grounds. As he was taken along the beach of Inamuragasaki and past the Goryo Shrine (five kilometers away from Tatsunokuchi), Nichiren Shonin, who knew he was going to be executed, sent a young boy, Kumaomaru, to fetch Shijo Kingo, a faithful follower who lived nearby. Kingo, upon hearing Nichiren Shonin's dire situation, gathered his three brothers and ran barefoot to his master. Kingo tearfully accompanied his master, holding the reins of his horse.

At the time, Nichiren Shonin was thinking that this would be the place where he would be beheaded, since he saw everything was prepared for that at Tatsunokuchi. Taira-no-Yoritsuna sat in the official chair of witness. The executioner stood behind him. And all around the circle of death, lit by flickering torchlight, stood the armed guards. Nichiren Shonin was forced to be seated on a stone covered with leather. Seeing his master on the seat of execution, Kingo was greatly distressed and wanted to kill himself, but Nichiren Shonin stopped him and said, "I taught you that there are always possibilities



Nichiren Shonin was forced to sit on this stone as he was almost executed (Ryukoji Temple).

that practitioners of the Lotus Sutra will meet serious life-threatening persecutions. Don't act rashly."

Nichiren Shonin was profoundly moved by Kingo's pure faith and never forgot his heartfelt gratitude towards him. Thinking back to this occasion five years later, Nichiren Shonin wrote, in the *Emperor Sushun Letter*, "I still remember vividly how you accompanied me to Tatsunokuchi holding a horse by the bridle, and breaking into tears when I was about to be beheaded there. I will never forget this no matter how many lifetimes come and go. If by chance you should fall into hell, I will refuse the

invitation of Shakyamuni Buddha to become a buddha. Instead, I will go to hell with you. If we both entered hell, how could it be possible that we would not find Shakyamuni Buddha and the Lotus Sutra there?"

Nichiren Shonin spoke with supreme joy about the strong bonds and firm piety of master and follower led by the Buddha's teachings. Kingo's pure piety moved his master profoundly, because Nichiren Shonin was prevented from propagating the Lotus Sutra by many people and rejected by most Buddhist clergy.

A miraculous natural phenomenon was reported to occur at the very time when Nichiren Shonin was to be beheaded. It was in the middle of the night, around 2:00 a.m. The soldiers attending Yoritsuna surrounded Nichiren Shonin on the execution seat. The executioner was about to raise his sword overhead. *A Reply to Nun Myoho and Shuju Onfurumai Goshō (Reminiscences: from Tatsunokuchi to Minobu)* recounts what happened as follows:

"Suddenly, the midnight sky was ablaze with fire. Something shining like the moon flew like a ball from Enoshima Island from southeast to northwest, and all the people became visible as though the moon of the twelfth day had already set. The executioner, who was ready to kill Nichiren Shonin,

fell down on the ground blinded. The soldiers ran in fright, no one dared to return to the execution site. Even Commissioner Yoritsuna disappeared, not to be discovered until sometime later. Some of the soldiers got off their horses, and others squatted down on the ground, and still others remained stiff on horseback.

"Nichiren Shonin shouted, 'Why do you stay away from a felon like me? Come back here quickly.' None of them, however, came near him. 'Daybreak is coming very soon; what can you do if it gets light? If you have to kill me, do it right away. It would be unsightly when it gets lighter.' Although he shouted, there was no response."

The execution plot failed because of this miraculous phenomenon. Nichiren Shonin departed towards Echi to await exile to Sado on that same day.



Painting of Nichiren Shonin as he was nearly beheaded at Tatsunokuchi (Ryukoji Temple).

Pilgrimage to Minobusan and Other Major Nichiren Shu Temples

By Rev. Shoryo Tarabini

Every year, I come to Japan for the annual International Missionary Conference at Shumuin, Headquarters of Nichiren Shu. After the meeting this year, some Italian members asked me if they could accompany me to Minobusan Kuonji Temple. The members' wish was to know Nichiren Shu better, deepen their faith and enrich their experience with Buddhism, so together we planned an eight-day pilgrimage to most of the head Nichiren Temples. It was the first time for all of them to visit Japan, and they were very excited.

On the first day, we arrived at Kominato in Chiba Prefecture and stopped at Myorenji Temple to visit the tomb of Nichiren Shonin's parents, then continued to Tanjoji Temple, where Nichiren Shonin was born on February 16, 1222. We all marveled at the beautiful temple with its grand wooden gate, rows of numerous stone lanterns and the main hall (*hondo*). No one in the group had seen a life-sized statue of Nichiren Shonin before, and they were astonished to see the beautiful bronze image of Nichiren Shonin when he was a 12-year-old boy called "Zennichimaro." We continued to Seichoji Temple, where Nichiren Shonin became a monk under his master, Dozen-bo, and received his first priestly name "Rencho." It was here that he first chanted "Namu Myoho Renge Kyo" on the Asahigamori Peak of Mt. Kiyosumi on April 28, 1253. Here he changed his name to "Nichiren."

The following day, we visited Ikegami Honmonji Temple in Tokyo, where we received a special "Gokaicho" ceremony in which the statue of Nichiren Shonin

was revealed for us to see at the main altar. Later, we walked to Daibo Hongyoji Temple, where Nichiren resided during the last month of his life and where he entered Nirvana on October 13, 1282. Then we visited the "Dabisho" stupa, where Nichiren Shonin was cremated following his funeral.

On the third day, we traveled to Kamakura and visited Ryukoji Temple, the site of the Tatsunokuchi Persecution

(September 12, 1271). Then we visited Ankokuonji Temple, where Nichiren Shonin had resided and wrote the *Rissho Ankoku-ron (Treatise on Spreading Peace Throughout the Country by Establishing the True Dharma)* in 1260. We were welcomed by Rev. and Mrs. Chishin Hirai, who recently returned to Japan after many years of dedicated service as an international missionary and was appointed as the chief priest of Ankokuonji Temple. We

received a surprise lecture on the *Rissho Ankoku-ron*, and Rev. Hirai showed us the actual cave where Nichiren Shonin had written his most famous work.

On the fourth day, we had a day of rest because of a typhoon, and the next day we set off to Fujinomiya in Shizuoka Prefecture to visit Kitayama Honmonji Temple. This temple was founded 712 years ago by Nikko Shonin, one of Nichiren Shonin's six main disciples. The chief priest of Kitayama Honmonji Temple, Ven. Asahi Shonin personally conducted the "Gokaicho" ceremony where we could see an ancient statue of Nichiren Shonin and an original Mandala Gohonzon. Ven. Asahi said that he was deeply moved to see all of us chanting in the special Kitayama Honmonji tradition of "Hiki Daimoku" as we recited the sutra together.

The following day, we took a train to Minobusan and went to Kuonji Temple to chant the Odaimoku then to Oku-no-in (also called Shishinkaku), a temple dedicated to Nichiren Shonin's parents located near the top of Mt. Minobu. It is said that Nichiren Shonin climbed Mt. Minobu every day, to the spot where Shishinkaku Temple was built, because, on a clear day, he could see his home village of Kominato as he prayed for his deceased parents.

We took part in the 5:30 a.m. service at Kuonji Temple, and then we went to pray at the site of Nichiren Shonin's grave.

All the members were overjoyed to have been able to visit the places where Our Founder had lived, walked and propagated the Lotus Sutra. We made a vow to return next year, with more members from Europe so that they can experience this wonderful pilgrimage.



1. Enjoying an unexpected extra day at Minobusan. 2. With Ven. Asahi Shonin at Kitayama Honmonji Temple. 3. Statue of 12-year-old Zennichimaro (before he became Nichiren Shonin) at Tanjoji Temple. 4. Life-sized statue of Nichiren Shonin at Tanjoji Temple. 5. Caught in the rain at Kitayama Honmonji Temple.

TEMPLE EVENTS

**Nichigatsuzan Horinji
Dharmachakra
Sarnath, India
Myojitsu Nagakubo**

Japanese Classes in Sarnath

I have been holding Japanese language classes for the children of Sarnath recently. Whenever I am in India, I begin the daily classes at 8:30 a.m. and teach the basic Japanese alphabet; *hiragana* and *katakana*, and even some *kanji*. The class is divided into three levels, each with a different focus, so that their interest is maintained and doesn't diminish.

The children, ages 7-19, are eager to learn and would like to visit Japan or even work there in the future. Their motivation is triggered by a former student who studied at Horinji Temple, who then took the *kanji* test in Delhi and eventually began working for a Japanese company. It was a dream come true for many of the village children. It showed that, if they are earnest and study hard, anything is possible.



Unfortunately, I am not living in Sarnath so the lessons come in segments. But if they continue to review their lessons while I am back in Japan, when I return to Sarnath the possibility for improvement is there.

**Seattle Enkyoji Temple
Mrs. Mamiko Cederman**

Bi-monthly Retreat

Our bi-monthly Meditation and Health Retreat at the Seattle Enkyoji Temple was held on August 2-4. Our first retreat was held in April 2019. This was our third one, and it was fully attended.

The retreat is designed to instruct and share the teachings and techniques of developing a healthy Buddhist lifestyle with the participants. During this retreat,

the attendees were able to experience how Buddhism allows us to regulate our lives properly, which leads us to become happier and change negative behavior. The ideas shared in the retreat are all based on the teachings of the Lotus Sutra.

We learned a number of exercises, which are based on ancient Indian and Chinese medicine, on how to regulate our eating, sleeping, and breathing habits as well as our minds. Learning to live our lives, as taught by the Buddha and Nichiren Shonin, we are able to break free of the bonds of suffering and experience the reality of an awakened life.

Our next Meditation and Health Retreat will be held from October 4-6. If you are interested in attending, please contact us at: seattlebuddhist@hotmail.com

FIRST ENGLISH SODORIN

By Rev. Shoda Kanai

On July 26, eight *shami* (novices) entered Nichiren Buddhist International Center (NBIC) to begin the five-day *Sodorin*, conducted for the first time in English. The *shami*, from as far away as Brazil, England, and Indonesia, joined several *shami* from the United States to begin their first steps in becoming a Nichiren Shu priest.

Sodorin was created to instill in the potential priests what life would be like during the 35-day ordination practice (*Shingyo-dojo*). Many have never lived or worked inside an actual temple and this was a chance to prepare them for the upcoming grueling practice.

From day one, the *shami* were instructed on the mannerisms of priests; how to bow, proper responses to teachers (such as *Hai!* for "Yes!" or *Iie!* for "No!"), folding their *etai* (priest's robes), and other kinds of etiquette. Though many have attended previous *shami* conferences, this event was different as the structure was more rigid and serious, with hardly any free time. The *shami* moved from class to class throughout the



The *shami* practicing *raihai* in the *Sodorin*.



The *shami* class completing the first *Sodorin* conducted in English includes Kanmyo Ong, Kanse Capon, Kanjo Groham, Roen Drewello, Yotatsu Chiamulera, Eishin Valdez, Kanyu Kroll, and Kan-e Rosman.

day, learning service order, the various positions in a service, chanting sutras, and liturgical hymns (*shomyo*).

With the information gained in each class, the *shami* put their knowledge to use during the morning and evening services. The *shami* rotated through the various positions and were critiqued afterwards. Any mistakes made were corrected before the next service. Only by actively participating in services can the *shami* truly learn priestly manners.

The night class was a more relaxed hour of free discussion. During this time, the *shami* split into two groups to create a list of what type of priest they wished to be. The list was then shortened to seven main points that were written down, and all the *shami* read this as a vow and dedication in front of the *Gohonzon*, Shakyamuni Buddha, and Nichiren Shonin. These words will have a lasting impact in the years to come.

On the final day for the closing ceremony, each *shami* was assigned a duty and participated in the actual service. After four days of study and

practice, everyone was able to pull together and conduct a beautiful ceremony! The teachers were amazed at how wonderfully everyone did their part to contribute to the overall performance. This experience should carry forward and help them during *Shingyo-dojo*.

Lastly, after the conclusion of English *Sodorin*, a chanting test was conducted as this is one of the requirements before gaining entrance into *Shingyo-dojo*. The nervous *shami* were split into two groups and were tested on various chapters of the Lotus Sutra in Japanese and English. When the highly anticipated results were announced that everyone passed, a quick rush of relief fell upon them. One even jumped for joy!

Though the English *Sodorin* finished quickly, there are many detailed items these *shami* must fine tune before entering *Shingyo-dojo*. The lessons learned must not be forgotten but practiced continually over the upcoming months to better prepare themselves, as this is just one step to complete before becoming a Nichiren Shu priest.

OUR EXPERIENCE OF THE SODORIN

The English *Sodorin* was very good, and it increased my knowledge of Nichiren Shu. The teachers were wonderful and trained us patiently. For me, there were many new things that I need to practice, and they were very useful.

—*Shami Kanmyo Ong (Indonesia)*

I was very grateful to be able to attend this English *Sodorin* at NBIC. As it was the first held outside Japan and conducted in English, I know that there was a lot of preparation involved. I'd like to express my appreciation to the instructors and everyone else who helped make it happen. Although I have attended *shami* seminars at NBIC before, the feeling of the *Sodorin* training was different. The teachers emphasized the spirit of serving and instructed us on proper behavior while living in a monastery to prepare for the 35-day *Shingyo-dojo* which I hope to attend next year.

—*Shami Kanse Capon (U.K.)*

I feel that my faith and understanding has deepened with my experiences at *Sodorin*. The training was physically and mentally difficult, but I always feel more determined to push forward after intense training. It was very helpful to get a better understanding of my strengths and weaknesses and what I will need to work on in hopes of attending *Shingyo-dojo* in the spring. I am also very grateful to our teachers and staff and fellow *shami*. In summary, always take the time to properly greet people, put your full spirit into every service, thank the people who cook for you, and don't think that because the retreat is over that our work is done!

—*Shami Roen Drewello (U.S.)*

Sodorin was an amazing opportunity to learn, to practice, to meet my fellow *shami* again, and to feel the mood of the monastery. It was the chance that I was waiting for, a dream come true. During the training, we needed to be aware of the rules and keep the discipline. We had many interesting activities, starting from early in the morning and going into the evening. We even practiced during meals. We also talked about our dreams, our plans as future Nichiren Shu ministers, and listened to the teachers' aspirations and thoughts. Our skills in chanting and performing the services also were tested, so I could get to know my weak points better, and how to improve them. I felt that the teachers were very kind to us and really concerned about our development and learning. Through this training, I feel that I deepened my faith in the teachings of the Buddha and Nichiren Shonin. I vow to keep practicing to spread all the teachings that I learned in *Sodorin* as repayment of the debts of gratitude that I have received from everybody who had supported me during my studies.

—*Shami Yotatsu Chiamulera (Brazil)*

Calendar for October 2019–November 2019

OCT 1 Ceremony of Changing the Robes on the Statue of Nichiren Shonin, Minobusan

OCT 10 Ceremony in Memory of the Founder's Exile to Sado Island

OCT 12 Minobusan and Ikegami Mando Parades

OCT 13 Oeshiki

OCT 13 738th Memorial Service for Nichiren Shonin

NOV 11 Commemoration Day for the Komatsubara Persecution

NOV 12 20th Anniversary Grand Ceremony at Dragon Palace Temple in Nagpur, India

NOV 13 Memorial for Nichizo Shonin

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